

**2024 Core Mission Grant
Executive Summary of Finalist Proposal
Women, Children and Families Focus Area**

1. **Organization Name:** Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children of Atlantic, Cape May, and Camden Counties
2. **Organization website:** <https://casaacc.org/>
3. **County where organization headquartered** Operate administrative/program offices in both Camden and Atlantic Counties
4. **County(ies) being served by proposed project:** Camden County
5. **Organization Mission and Vision Statement:** The Mission Statement: Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children of Atlantic, Cape May, and Camden Counties and its trained volunteers speak on behalf of abused and neglected children in the foster care system and are dedicated to ensuring these children are placed in safe permanent homes as quickly as possible.

The Vision of CASA is to serve all children living in the foster care system in Atlantic, Cape May, and Camden Counties by providing the best trained volunteer advocates to ensure these children will enjoy a safe and permanent home as quickly as possible.

6. **Organization's Current Annual Operating Budget 2023:** \$1,322,500.00
7. **Proposed Project Name:** Expanding Access to Volunteer Advocates for Children and Youth Living in Foster Care in Camden County
8. **Proposed Project Summary:** This project really contains two objectives over two years - the expansion of services to the children of Camden County living in foster care and the physical expansion of office space in Camden County. These two objectives are intertwined.

The first objective of this project addresses our growth barrier in Camden County, specifically the lack of CASA volunteers and the community awareness of our organization. The first year of this project, we will tackle the need for more volunteers to expand service to the children of Camden County. At the end of 2023, we were only serving 11% of the 480 children living in foster care in Camden County. The Judiciary has made expanding service to underserved children in the state, including in Camden County, a priority and this project will help us meet that goal by implementing a multi-pronged, comprehensive outreach and marketing plan.

The second objective addresses our other growth barrier in Camden County - our lack of community visibility in our current City Hall office space. While we are grateful for the space that we currently have, we are hopeful that a new office will be more conducive to operating a community-based

volunteer organization with adequate parking, community meeting rooms, and private spaces. The ideal office will provide space for individual and group volunteer meetings, volunteer recruitment Information Sessions, and large-scale training rooms. A dedicated community space will also help us build connections with stakeholders and civic leaders. Most importantly, private office areas to discuss sensitive information and conduct volunteer interviews are paramount to the nature of our work. Additionally, accessible office space would provide CASA the community visibility that is necessary to build healthy connections, recruit volunteers, help secure local funding, and fulfill our ultimate goal of increased service to Camden County children.

Our goals for both objectives are to enhance public awareness, build Camden County relationships, increase volunteers through community awareness, public relations, and media outreach. Funding will increase our communication with potential volunteers and ultimately will help us convert individuals into trained CASA volunteers.

We have operated in Camden County for nearly two years and in that time, we have laid the groundwork for improving advocacy to children in the County. Since establishing in Camden County, we have improved relations with the courts and child welfare, established a competent, professional staff, and trained new CASA volunteers. We are seeing improvements with the addition of four new Camden County-based Board members, and a new Director of Development who is a resident and working out of our Camden County office. In addition, two additional full-time staff also live and work in Camden County. These staff and Board members have helped expand our knowledge of the area and have started to show results with an increase in new volunteer inquiries, increase in the number of children from Camden County served, and number of community partnerships explored. As these new relationships build organically, we plan to supplement our outreach with paid advertising to reach potential volunteers. Marketing, coupled with relationship building, community visibility, and a comprehensive communications plan is essential to reach diverse potential volunteers and increase advocacy to the children of Camden County.